L:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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"It is probable good-looking women have often been kept back by others who had not equal confidence in me[1]."

Veddas are affectionate and indulgent parents, never refusing a small child anything it wants and giving it always of the best. We have frequently seen men save for their children food which had been given to them and which they considered specially good, such as bananas or coconuts. The babies are generally happy, but should they cry their wishes are immediately gratified by either parent. We saw a naked boy of about two and a half years strut proudly up and down outside Pihillegodagalge with his father's axe hung on his shoulder, he was extremely happy and all went well until he threatened one of the dogs with the axe, then his mother was obliged to interfere and the child tried to hit her with it; the father seeing this got up and tried to coax the child into giving up the axe, but the boy was now excited and would not give it up, at last he flung it at his father and hit his leg. The man was obviously annoyed and threw the axe from him into the jungle, but he did not attempt to scold or punish the child who was now howling with rage, indeed, after a little while some food was given him to pacify him.

Another time a woman who had been cutting yams with a knife put this down, when her baby snatched it up, and although she was obliged to watch lest he hurt himself, she allowed him to play with the knife. Yet when a child is old enough to wear a little rag in the way of clothing, possibly from six to eight years old, he is expected to behave himself properly and strange to say he does so. One day it was raining heavily, and we were all sitting in the rock shelter at Pihillegodagalge; at the further end of the cave we noticed a lad of seven or nine years old having a heated argument with his mother, suddenly he turned round and went out into the rain, when he returned he had controlled his temper; later we remarked on this and were told that the lad was considered old enough to behave as a man; a boy of this age would not hit his mother as a little child might do and yet be excused. It may here be mentioned that children of both sexes go naked until about six or seven years old, though perhaps the general age for the assumption of

[1] *Tidsskriftet*, Vol. 1, 1886, p. 191.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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clothing is younger in the case of girls than boys. The boy assumes a piece of rag attached to a string in the same manner as men, while girls wear a piece of stuff fastened round their hips like a sarong. A child's first cloth is put on by its mother without any ceremony. The only toys seen were bows and arrows, and these are possessed by every male child. We never saw a little girl play with a bow and arrow, but mothers make them for the baby boys while these are still crawling about. Such toys of course are small and roughly made, but bigger boys of five years old and upwards make quite neat little bows, and shoot with them tolerably well; they do not feather their arrows. Other children were seen playing with clay and sticks; and girls frequently play with broken pots with which they pretend to cook.

As women take the children with them when they go out to dig for yams, little girls soon learn to do this, and boys would begin to be taken out hunting when about ten years old. It was difficult to find out whether the fathers' or mothers' brothers took the greater part in training the boys and it seemed that a lad eager to go out hunting would be taken by any grown man, who in the very small community is usually a relative. Lads would be encouraged by their elders to shoot at a mark with their bows and arrows, and later they would stalk small birds and shoot fish[1].

When a child tells a lie he may be told "Go away, I do not believe what you say," but it appeared that even young children were usually truthful. One thing is taught the lads systematically, that is the method of collecting honey from the combs of the rock bee. Whenever the caves are conveniently situated a ladder of creepers is suspended from a tree in the jungle above and hangs over the end of the face of rock which forms the cave. On this the youths play at "honey getting." At Pihllegodagalge the lads were quite willing to demonstrate to us how it was done, and the elder men showed clearly that this

[1] Nevill, in the *Taprobanian* (Vol. i, 1886, p. 183), says ".....a pellet bow is used occasionally by small boys, and birds are often shot with it, though the aim seems very uncertain." Pellet bows were seen at Henebedde, they are used regularly by the fishalese in the neighbourhood, and we do not doubt that the practice was introduced by them.

8: Spittal D-8 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX8 Vedda AX8

these Veddas. Bingoda is not all Vedda; essentially it is a Sinhalese close village of about six or eight families, within a stone's throw of which are the crude huts belonging to the few surviving Veddas. Through a tangle of overgrown scrub we reach them; they are not so numerous that we cannot easily name every single Vedda there.

Three we have met before, Suthubanda, Gama and Badapissa; it was they who led us such a chase at Galmeda. In the first hut we find the swarthy Gama and his comely young wife Kalu—his fifth experiment in matrimony: and he barely twenty-five! Not far from this is Suthubanda's abode, in which are his wife, the skinny Thuthi, mother by previous marriage of Gamma; their two little boys, Handuna and Naida and girls Kumi and Punji. Handuna is the quaintest brat imaginable; he is ash-coloured from top to toe, through crouching by the hearth all night to keep warm his naked body; for, all he has for cover is a little strip of loin cloth drooping erratically from a slack waist-string that sags well below his nates; his rotund abdomen accommodates an enormous spleen; with hands crossed over shrugged shoulders to keep the chill away, he gazes quizzically at you.

Away from these two homes, across the stream, is the only other Vedda hut. Unlike those of Suthubanda and Gama which are of wattle and dust, this is a sadly dilapidated mud structure once occupied by a Moor. It is the most pathetic and curious menage here, and belongs to Kaira brother of Suthubanda. His wife Randunna, a hideous squint-eyed thing, is mother by a previous husband to Heenthuthi the twelve-year old wife of Badapissa (Muthua), Kaira's younger brother! A more ridiculous pair it would be hard to find: the wife a mere child, the husband barely more. The Veddas favour such early marriages, saying that, growing up thus together, the two learn to love each other well. Be that as it may, it does seem a most piteous travesty of human matings. Huddled by the hearth and shivering with ague, is old Thanthi mother of the clan, and wife of the dead chief Neela. And, lastly, we have here the most pathetic figure in all Bingoda—Kummi, a girl of fifteen, dust-besmeared, ulcerated, crippled, and so scantily clad that she is ashamed to stand lest she reveal her nakedness. A misery to herself and others, she sits apart with face shyly lowered, taking timid glances every now and then, like some wild thing, from large black lustrous eyes that might have shone befittingly on the face of some proud beauty.

To these, though they now dwelt apart at Mullegama, we must add Kaurala and his family, for he too was of Bingoda, and is maternal uncle of Suthubanda. By his two wives, Balli and Ranni, he has four little sons, Kaira Vamiya, Heratha, Kalua and Sela; and two daughters, Ranni and Dingi.

These details, though perhaps tedious, serve to bring out vividly the intimate inter-relationships of the Veddas, their apparent disregard of appearance or age in their choice of wives, the promiscuity of life in their one-roomed homes—mother, child and father all lying huddled together in a little space. For all that it must not be assumed that Veddas are devoid of a moral code. A man may have more than one wife, it is true; and, if it pleases him, he may cast her aside like a worn garment; but to each man his own woman while she is his; that is the Vedda law which all respect.